



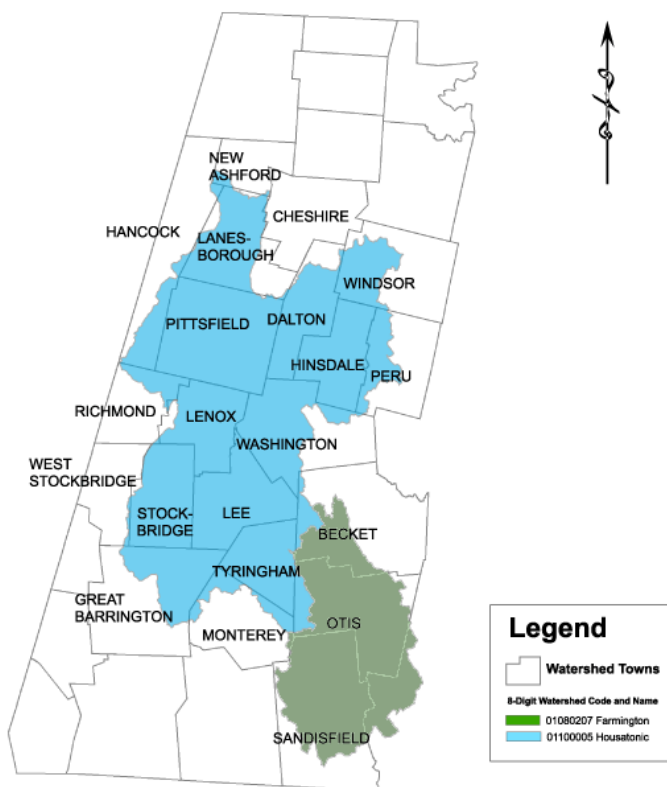
## BACKGROUND

# The Conservation Security Program in Massachusetts

2005

- The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a stewardship program that recognizes the efforts of farmers who have been practicing conservation and taking care of the land for some time. Meeting specific eligibility criteria allows farmers to apply for payments on productive land at several levels. Payments increase with the amount of conservation work that has been done.
- CSP is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- In **Massachusetts**, NRCS will be able to offer CSP sign-up in portions of several major watersheds in the spring of 2005. These watershed areas lie within Essex County and Berkshire County.
- These watershed areas include more than 600 farms which encompass about 30,000 acres of agricultural land that is eligible for CSP. Of these 30,000 acres, about 30 percent is cropland and about 65 percent is hay and grazing land and five percent is used to produce orchard crops and nursery stock.
- Each of the selected CSP watershed areas within Massachusetts possess unique and important natural attributes that are valued and often utilized by our farmers and the public.
- In **Essex County**, the watershed areas lie within the North Coastal Watersheds of the Ipswich and Parker Rivers. In **Berkshire County** the watershed area lies within the North and Central portions of the Housatonic River and the Farmington River.
- The North Coastal Watersheds of the Ipswich and Parker Rivers encompass large expanses of fresh and saltwater wetland resources that support both marine fisheries and freshwater wetland and upland wildlife. The Ipswich River serves as an important public drinking water supply.
- The Housatonic and Farmington River Watersheds are one of the most biologically diverse regions in the state. Although the main stem of the Housatonic River is compromised by contamination with PCB's, the numerous wetland and other water resources within its watershed provide exceptional stopover and nesting habitat for black and wood duck and migratory waterfowl. Deer, bear, upland game and non-game wildlife abound throughout the watershed. Fishing, hunting, camping, canoeing and hiking are therefore popular associated recreational activities enjoyed by the general public.
- Farmers within these watershed areas are stewards of their land, operating with a long-term commitment to maintaining and improving these working lands for generations to come. Many of these farmers have employed improved management techniques and proven conservation practices; some with technical assistance from NRCS and some simply on-their-own.
- Conservation practices such as permanent vegetative cover, cover crop, conservation cropping systems, nutrient management, pest management, pasture and hayland management, and prescribed grazing are commonplace on these farms.

## Conservation Security Program 2005 Berkshire Watersheds



## Conservation Security Program 2005 Essex Watersheds



Berkshire County	Essex County
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